
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS BY TYPE OF CLAIM

The data from the *1997 Survey of Veterans' Satisfaction With the VA Compensation and Pension Process* show that the demographics of the respondents vary considerably according to type of claim, or end product (EP). By understanding the differences in the demographics of those applying for various types of claims and then tailoring its service delivery and outreach efforts accordingly, the VA can increase the quality of service for each subgroup of the veteran or dependent population.¹ For example, perhaps by targeting a decrease in the level of complexity of letters to claimants with lower educational levels, the claim process would be easier to understand for these claimants. Also, for EP's that are comprised of large percentages of older claimants, VA might make the claim process easier by ensuring that letters are written in large-print or letting the claimants know that they can connect to a TDD line when calling the VA.

The charts and descriptions that follow show that many EP's are comprised of respondents that have a unique set of demographic characteristics. The five demographic characteristics that are examined are veteran or dependent status, sex, age, educational level, and period of service. Data detailing each demographic subgroup's satisfaction with the handling of their claim are also included.

Veteran or Dependent Status

- Chart 1, entitled "Veteran or Dependent Status of Respondents by End Product", shows that the majority of the respondents within most of the EP's are veterans.
- **The two EP's that contain a majority of non-veteran respondents (spouses, widows/widowers, children, or custodians of the veteran) are "Initial Survivors Compensation, DIC, or Death Compensation" (99.8%) and "Initial Survivors Pension Claim" (99.4%).**
- There are also substantial minorities of non-veteran respondents in the EP's "Income, Estate, or Election Issue" (45%) and "Reopened Pension Claim" (36.4%).

¹ The data from the *1997 Survey of Veterans' Satisfaction with the VA Compensation and Pension Process* should not be taken to represent the entire population of veterans or dependents, as it is based on a sample of only those veterans or dependents with recent claims experience. Also, these data are based solely on the responses of 64 percent of the original sample, as some individuals did not return the questionnaire that was mailed to them. However, since the number of completed questionnaires obtained was still quite substantial (24,300), the data presented here can be viewed as fairly representative of a large portion of the veteran and dependent population with recent claims experience.

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Sex Distribution

- Chart 2, entitled “Sex Distribution of Respondents by End Product”, shows that the majority of respondents are men for most of the EP’s. Not surprisingly, the two EP’s which show women as the majority of the respondents are “Initial Survivors Compensation, DIC, or Death Compensation” (98.2%), and “Initial Survivors Pension Claim” (96.5%).

Age Distribution

- Chart 3, entitled “Age Distribution of Respondents by End Product”, makes it clear that there is a substantial concentration of respondents in one or two age groups within many of the EP’s.
- **The majority of respondents having Initial Disability Compensation Claims are over 35 years of age.**

In the EP “Initial Disability Compensation Claims (less than 8 issues), almost half of the respondents (46.5%) are 35 to 54 years of age, and over one-fourth of the respondents (27.7%) are over 55 years of age.

In the EP “Initial Disability Compensation Claims (8 or more issues)”, 74.9 percent of the respondents are 35 to 54 years of age, and only 20.5 percent are younger than 35 years of age.

- **Over half of the respondents are over 65 years of age in the following 4 EP’s:**

Reopened Pension Claim (60% over 65, 33.3% over 75 years of age)
Initial Survivors Compensation, DIC, or Death Compensation (50.6%)
Income, Estate or Election Issue (62.1%)
Initial Survivors Pension Claim (55.5%)

Educational Level

- Chart 4, entitled “Educational Level of Respondents by End Product”, shows that the majority of the respondents among all of the EP’s were in the categories of either “Some college or technical school” or “High school graduate or equivalent”.
- **Over one-third of the respondents in the EP “Initial Disability Compensation Claim (8 or more issues)” were college graduates or higher.**
- Almost half (45.8%) of respondents in the EP “Income, Estate, or Election Issue” and 42.6 percent of respondents in the EP “Reopened Pension Claim” have an educational level below high school graduate.
- Educational level of respondents also has a clear relationship with age. Chart 5, entitled “Educational Level of Respondents by Age”, shows that for those over 25 years of age, educational level tends to decrease as age increases. The extremely small percentage of

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college graduates or higher of those 18 to 24 years of age (2.5%) may be due to the fact that these respondents simply have not had time to complete their education yet.

Period of Service

- **Over half of the responses (51.1%) in the EP “Initial Disability Compensation Claim (less than 8 issues)” and over three-fourths of the responses (76.5%) in the EP “Initial Disability Compensation Claim (8 or more issues)” were from veterans who served between the Vietnam Era and the Gulf War and/or through the Gulf War.**
- Almost half of the responses in the EP “Dependency Issue” (46.2%) and almost one-third in the EP’s “Reopened Compensation Claim” (32.4%) and “Reopened Pension Claim” (33.5%) were from veterans who served during the Vietnam Era.
- Over one-third of the responses in the EP “Income, Estate, or Election Issue” (37.3%) were from veterans who served during World War II.

Satisfaction with the handling of claims

- In Chart 7, entitled “Satisfaction Levels of Respondents by End Product”, it can be seen that veterans who had “Dependency Issue” claims were most satisfied (70%) and veterans who had “Reopened Compensation Claims” were least satisfied (41.7%).
- Women with “Reopened Pension Claims” were most satisfied (71.6%) and women with “Reopened Compensation Claims” were least satisfied (52.9%).
- In general, women tend to have higher levels of satisfaction than men, and the spouse or widow/widower tends to rate the service higher than the veteran does.
- Of the respondents having “Reopened Compensation Claims”, the age group with the highest percentage of respondents, 45 to 54 years, had the lowest level of satisfaction with their claim (37.7%) compared to the other age groups.
- Of the respondents having “Reopened Compensation Claims”, “Reopened Pension Claims”, “Income, Estate, or Election Issues”, and “Initial Survivors Pension Claim”, satisfaction levels tend to decrease as educational level increases. However, of the respondents having “Initial Disability Compensation Claims (8 or more issues)” and “Initial Disability Compensation Claims (less than 8 issues), satisfaction levels tend to *increase* as educational level increases.

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Chart 3: Age Distribution of Respondents by End Product

Percent of Respondents

	Initial Disability Compensation Claim (8 or more issues) (N=420)	Reopened Compensation Claim (N=7453)	Initial Disability Compensation Claim (less than 8 issues) (N=2030)	Reopened Pension Claim (N=1724)	Dependency Issue (N=5660)	Initial Survivors Compensation, DIC, or Death Compensation (N=425)	Income, Estate, or Election Issue (N=4012)	Initial Disability Pension Claim (N=677)	Initial Survivors Pension Claim (N=663)
18 to 24 years	2.6	.6	8.9	.1	3.4	1.9	.2	.2	1.1
25 to 34 years	17.9	6.6	17.1	.6	4.9	1.9	.4	1.0	2.3
35 to 44 years	47.0	13.6	21.4	4.6	18.2	7.4	3.7	6.5	7.7
45 to 54 years	27.9	32.7	25.1	21.6	47.4	17.4	17.1	25.5	13.8
55 to 64 years	2.7	14.9	11.9	13.2	11.9	20.8	16.5	24.6	19.6
65 to 74 years	1.0	19.0	11.6	26.7	8.6	32.3	33.8	26.3	29.1
75 + years	1.0	12.6	4.2	33.3	5.5	18.3	28.3	15.9	26.4
Median Age	40.66	53.04	46.00	68.35	49.46	65.23	68.24	61.15	66.75

Chart 6: Period of Service of Respondents

by End Product

Percent of Responses*

*One respondent could have served in more than one period

	Initial Disability Compensation Claim (8 or more issues) (N=878)	Reopened Compensation Claim (N=11406)	Initial Disability Compensation Claim (less than 8 issues) (N=3205)	Reopened Pension Claim (N=1210)	Dependency Issue (N=6732)	Initial Survivors Compensation, DIC, or Death Compensation (N=1)	Income, Estate, or Election Issue (N=2478)	Initial Disability Pension Claim (N=706)	Initial Survivors Pension Claim (N=2)
Before World War I	.0	.1	.0	.0	.0	.0	.2	.1	.0
World War I	.0	.0	.0	.1	.1	.0	.4	.1	.0
Between WWI and WWII	.1	.7	.2	.9	.3	.0	.9	1.0	.0
World War II	.5	13.4	5.7	31.9	6.5	100.0	37.3	21.2	.0
Between WWII and Korean Conflict	.6	4.0	2.5	3.5	1.9	.0	4.6	3.8	.0
Korean Conflict	1.0	11.1	7.5	17.8	5.6	.0	23.7	21.6	53.0
Between Korean Conflict and Vietnam Era	1.9	11.7	9.1	7.6	7.6	.0	6.2	15.4	.0
Vietnam Era	19.3	32.4	23.9	33.5	46.2	.0	23.9	32.1	47.0
Between Vietnam Era and Gulf War	36.6	16.6	23.7	3.8	20.2	.0	1.8	3.7	.0
Gulf War	39.9	10.1	27.4	1.0	11.5	.0	.9	1.0	.0

Chart 7: Satisfaction Levels of Respondents by End Product
Percent somewhat or very satisfied with the handling of their claim

Demographic Characteristics (Groups with less than 5% of respondents in any EP omitted)	Initial Disability Compensation Claim (8 or more issues)	Reopened Compensation Claim	Initial Disability Compensation Claim (less than 8 issues)	Reopened Pension Claim	Dependency Issue	Initial Survivors Compensation, DIC, or Death Compensation	Income, Estate, or Election Issue	Initial Disability Pension Claim	Initial Survivors Pension Claim
Veteran	56.4	41.7	53.3	56.7	70.0	*	68.6	67.6	*
Spouse of the veteran	*	60.0	*	75.7	69.4	66.2	71.0	76.7	67.0
Widow/widower of the veteran	*	64.7	*	70.7	72.2	68.1	68.4	*	65.5
Men	54.7	41.5	52.8	57.8	70.1	*	69.2	69.4	*
Women	64.2	52.9	55.3	71.6	66.6	65.9	68.1	67.9	66.4
18 to 24 years old	*	52.3	58.1	*	68.2	*	*	*	*
25 to 34 years old	52.0	39.8	57.7	*	66.9	*	*	*	*
35 to 44 years old	51.3	41.6	56.3	51.9	69.4	*	72.8	52.4	68.6
45 to 54 years old	63.2	37.7	50.4	52.6	69.1	64.4	62.9	72.2	68.5
55 to 64 years old	*	45.5	53.2	62.0	70.8	70.5	68.3	69.4	71.0
65 to 74 years old	*	45.6	43.0	66.4	70.1	64.2	68.1	69.1	63.0
75 + years old	*	49.0	53.2	66.7	72.8	69.3	73.2	72.1	64.7
Less than high school	*	48.5	46.2	68.5	71.9	71.0	75.2	72.3	68.1
Some high school	*	44.8	41.6	68.7	68.7	53.8	71.3	72.2	64.9
High school grad or equivalent	50.9	43.1	51.7	60.2	70.4	73.1	68.2	72.3	66.8
Some college or technical school	57.8	41.4	53.5	51.5	68.1	56.3	60.0	62.1	64.5
College graduate or higher	56.4	41.3	57.5	60.3	70.5	71.4	63.3	61.1	63.4
World War II	*	44.5	45.2	60.3	67.3	*	71.5	71.2	*
Korean Conflict	*	44.5	48.8	63.4	73.4	*	68.7	65.3	*
Between Korean Conflict and Vietnam	*	45.4	52.6	56.3	70.9	*	66.4	69.8	*
Vietnam Era	61.4	40.8	52.0	50.9	70.1	*	63.7	68.4	*
Between Vietnam Era and Gulf War	58.5	42.2	58.2	45.9	68.5	*	56.4	*	*
Gulf War	55.0	41.5	59.2	*	70.7	*	*	*	*

* Number in category is less than 20.

Surveys and Research Staff (245)

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